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South Africa: The Dynamics of Black Politics [redacted]

An Intelligence Assessment

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Directorate of
Intelligence

South Africa: The Dynamics of Black Politics [redacted]

An Intelligence Assessment

[redacted]

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South Africa: The Dynamics of Black Politics [redacted]

Key Judgments

Information available as of 3 March 1987 was used in this report.

Despite the South African Government's recent success in muting antigovernment violence and protest, black political activity, in our judgment, has changed fundamentally during the past two and a half years of unrest. South African blacks are dramatically more politicized, increasingly organized, and tactically more sophisticated. Some of these changes were already under way before the outbreak of the current unrest, while others are more directly the result of the continuing turmoil in the black communities. We believe that these still evolving trends in black politics are now a permanent part of the South African scene, rendering as unlikely black acceptance of the government's limited reform plans and laying the groundwork for new and more destructive outbreaks of violence. [redacted]

During the next year, the momentum of black political organizations will, in all likelihood, continue to be checked by Pretoria. Government countermeasures that prohibit gatherings, detain thousands of black leaders, and divert the energy of most others by forcing them to concentrate on avoiding police actions are likely to result in less visible turmoil than was evident during the 20 months preceding the imposition of a nationwide state of emergency in June 1986. Inherent intergenerational, ideological, and ethnic conflicts will also continue to weaken the cohesiveness of black political movements [redacted]

The government, however, has failed to slow the pace of black politicization and has not derailed grassroots organizing by antiapartheid activists. A myriad of youth, civic, church, and special action groups have mushroomed in townships and, despite government efforts to crush them, still survive in many, if not most, communities. South African security methods have also been ineffective in dealing with the more sophisticated tactics used by the black opposition, such as the use of economic leverage and efforts to destroy—and in some cases replace—government-backed institutions in the townships. [redacted]

In our view, South Africa faces a state of endemic violence over the next several years that will be fueled by urbanization, a black labor force far outpacing the job-creation potential of a slow-growth economy, white intransigence and partiality for force, and black anger and frustration. Although the intensity of this violence will fluctuate, and the pattern will alternate between intrablack political fighting, mass security force actions in the townships, and occasional black attacks against whites, we believe blacks and whites both will be increasingly affected. Ominous demographic trends indicate that the young black population will continue to grow faster than employment opportunities, and thus be supportive of radical political causes. Many will join armed township militants—some associated with

the exile-based African National Congress (ANC)—which are likely to increase attacks on civilian targets, resulting in more white casualties.

Pretoria will react to black unrest—and particularly to attacks on whites—by employing its security apparatus to whatever extent necessary to contain the violence. Although we believe that the government is willing to use extreme measures, such as massive detention camps or widespread lethal force, Pretoria probably will not resort to such means unless white casualties increase substantially, a development that we believe is possible but not probable during the next three to four years.

We believe that black antigovernment attitudes will harden and the moderate base will shrink further as a result of the protracted—and probably permanent—security crackdown. The growing politicization of blacks, therefore, is almost certainly irreversible, in our view. More blacks will enter the fray in reaction to their living conditions, apartheid strictures, and pressure from township militants.

As a result, we foresee a lengthy but bloody stalemate between blacks and whites that will keep South Africa in the international spotlight. South African blacks will continue to believe that the United States is capable of helping blacks and of coercing the white government to share power. The United States can expect to be rebuffed by some blacks who have an unrealistic assessment of the West's ability to influence Pretoria and who are swayed by political and material Soviet support to the ANC. Despite probable black frustration with US inability to fulfill their expectations, however, we believe most black leaders will want to maintain contacts with US officials

Growing racial turmoil in South Africa will continue to offer the Soviet Union opportunities to discredit the West, both with South African blacks and international audiences. Moscow, in our view, expects a lengthy process of change. The Soviets probably calculate that the ANC will be the principal vehicle for change in South Africa and view the banned South African Communist Party as an important means of influence within the ANC, along with ANC dependence on Soviet military support. In the long term, the Soviets clearly favor the rise to power of a pro-Soviet black government, but, for the present, appear primarily concerned with exploiting politically, especially with Third World countries, the dilemma that the South African problem poses for the West in general and the United States in particular.

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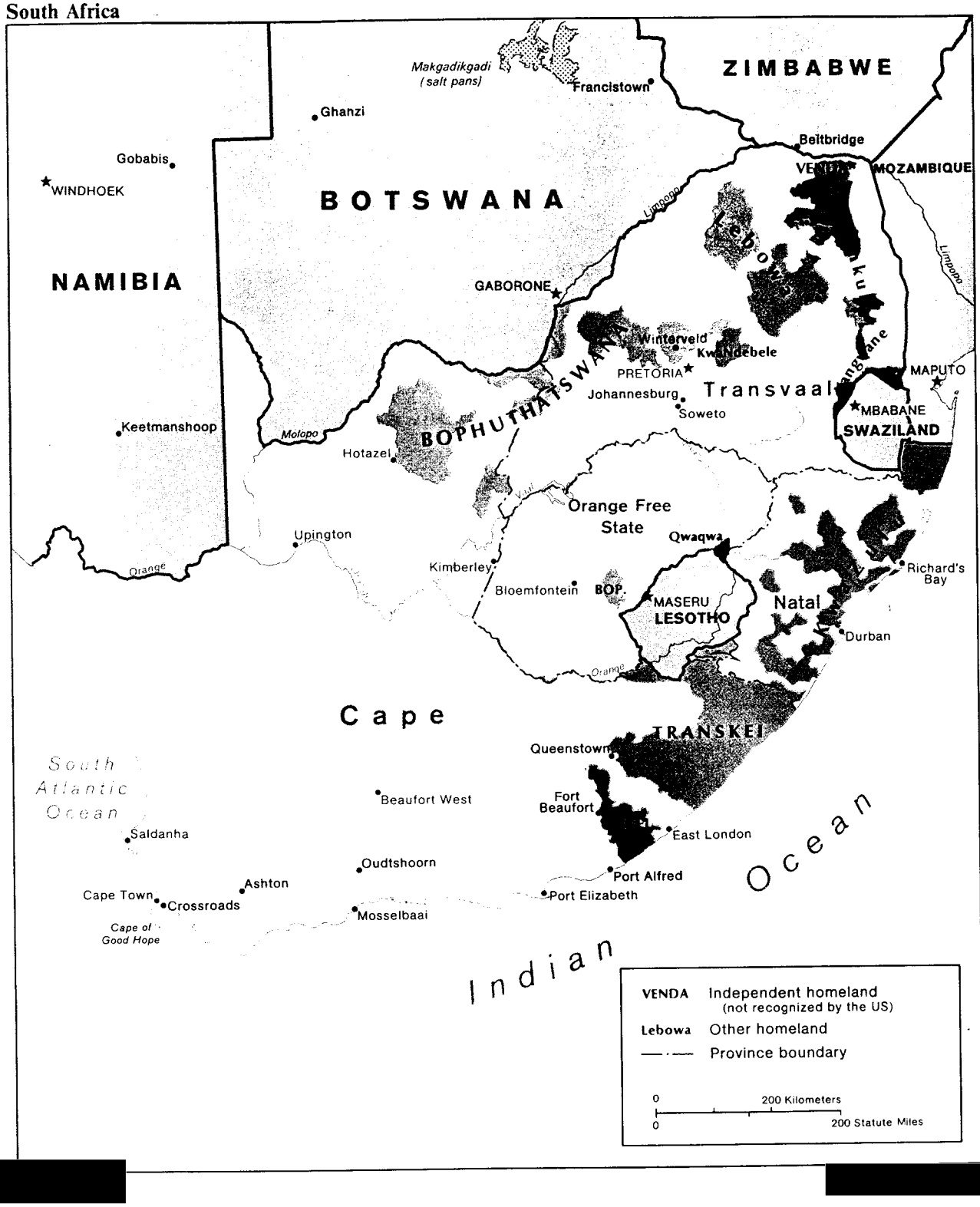
Figure 1
South Africa



South Africa: The Dynamics of Black Politics

Introduction

Violence and protest have often characterized the South African political scene, but the current unrest, dating from about September 1984, has been the longest and most widespread. The turmoil has claimed more than 2,300 lives (mostly black), resulted in over $100 million worth of property damage, and led to the detention of about 20,000 antigovernment activists, according to government and research group statistics.

More significant than these statistics, however, are what we view as the fundamental changes that have occurred in the black political dynamic during the past two and a half years. Numerous academic studies and polls have indicated that South African blacks today generally are more politicized, organized, and sophisticated in the tactics they employ in their attempts to overthrow apartheid. Some of these changes were already under way before the outbreak of the current unrest, while others are more directly the result of the continuing turmoil in the black communities. Government attempts to reduce the level of violence have had some success, according to South African Government statistics, but Pretoria's efforts to influence black political attitudes have been ineffective and in some ways have helped reinforce changes occurring on the black political scene.

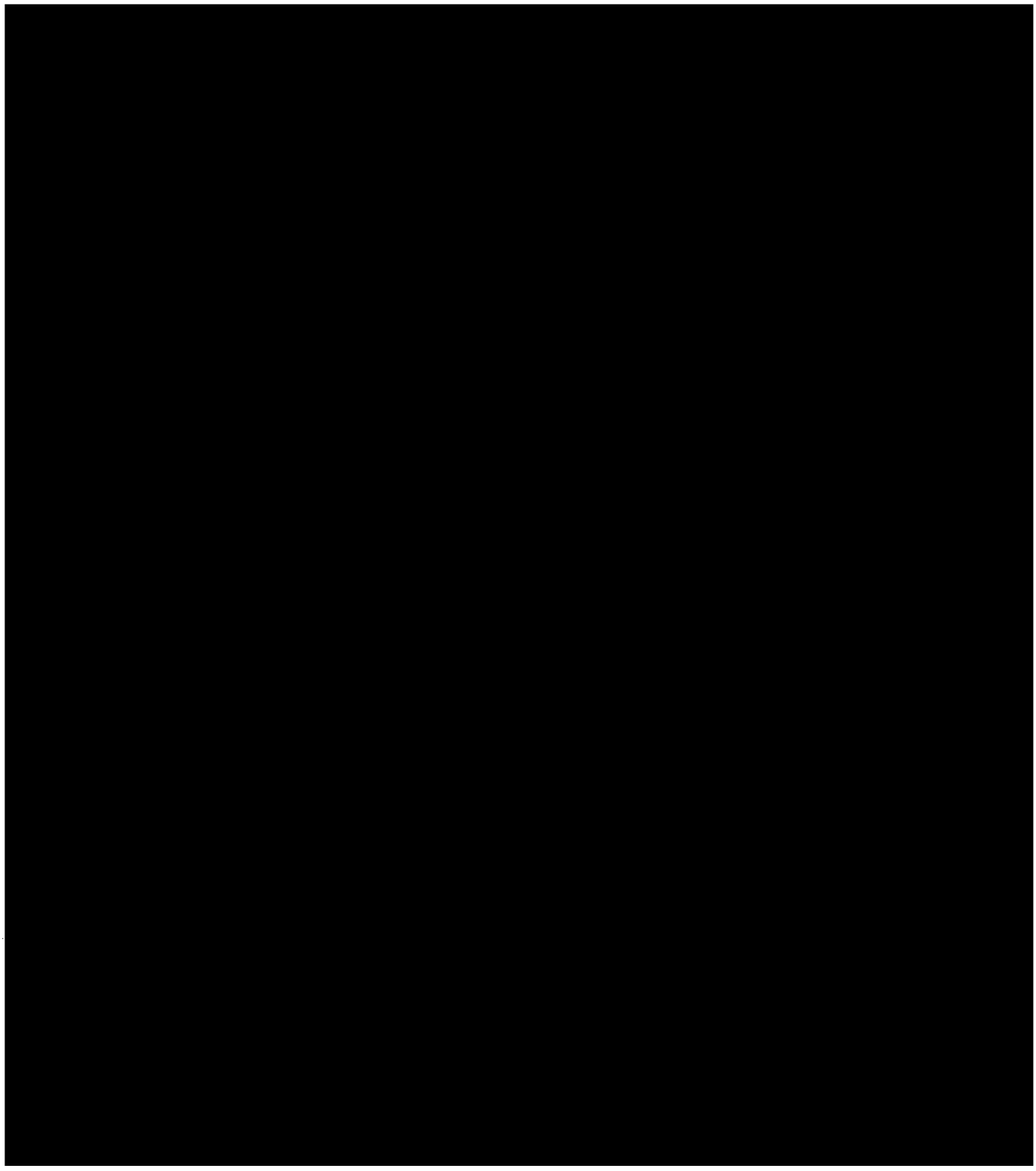
Attempts to quantify—or sometimes merely describe—this changing black political dynamic inevitably run into information roadblocks. Data on black political activities and organizations often are misleading or obscured. The black press and black leaders, for example, typically overstate accomplishments and support for various groups. The South African Government also sometimes exaggerates the capabilities and plans of blacks in an effort to win domestic support and international sympathy for its security measures. More often, however, Pretoria uses its control of the media and its monopoly on the flow of information to hide many of the facts, hoping to convince white South Africans that the government has full control of the situation, and to conceal the evidence of black grievances and protest from international audiences.

We believe that, despite these difficulties, trends in black politics are discernible by observing the interplay of black protest and government countermeasures and by analyzing survey data and the studies of numerous South African research institutes. This paper, which builds on previously published assessments,[1] will describe and assess the significance of recent trends in black politics. The impediments to organized black activity, from the government and within the black movement, will be reviewed as a basis for evaluating the prospects for effective black protest against a determined and strong white society. Finally, the paper will address the implications of the changing black political dynamic for the United States, including an assessment of the opportunities that growing black protest offers to the Soviet Union.

Two Years of Protest and Violence—A Snapshot

Striking at Authority

A review of press reporting shows that the most visible feature of black politics during the past two and a half years of unrest has been the politically related violence in many of South Africa's black townships. The violence, in our judgment, was precipitated mainly by the implementation of the



government's new constitution granting limited political rights to Coloreds and Indians but excluding the black majority and, to a lesser extent, by local economic grievances.[2] The unrest began in the Vaal Triangle south of Johannesburg in September 1984, quickly spread to the townships of eastern Cape Province, reached the Johannesburg-Pretoria area by July 1985, and finally struck western Cape Province. Although not all townships have been affected equally, and many were quiet for months before protest activity erupted, few areas have avoided unrest completely. [redacted]

During 1985-86, black protest also spread to homeland areas and to some small towns in the countryside where blacks staged general strikes or consumer boycotts. The residents of homeland and rural areas displayed a political awareness that sometimes matched that of urban dwellers, a development we attribute to the organizational and educational efforts of black political groups [redacted] for example, that blacks in the KwaNdebele homeland were organizing youth and civic groups similar to those in the urban townships. Approximately 100 were killed during protests against the decision by KwaNdebele leaders—later reversed—to accept nominal independence from Pretoria. Some homeland officials complained that urban students sent back to homeland schools were organizing antigovernment groups. [redacted]

The most publicized form of violence in the townships has been the attacks on "collaborators"—black policemen, town councilors, and suspected government informants. The use of the "necklace"—a gasoline-filled tire placed around the victim's neck and then set alight—has become the trademark for executions of such collaborators. According to government statistics, there were over 500 necklacings between September 1984 and April 1986; we cannot document how many of the killings were politically motivated. In addition to the murders, militants destroyed the homes of over 800 black policemen and government officials and subjected their families to assaults and other harassment. [redacted]

[redacted]

Pretoria has attributed the upswing in township violence to the African National Congress (ANC), but, based on our review [redacted] on ANC activity, we believe that most of the violence in the townships since 1984 has been "homegrown"—the work of local militants who are not under the direct control of an external group such as the ANC. However, government and academic data do indicate a corresponding increase in insurgent violence during the past two years, most of which Pretoria attributes to the ANC.[3] The data suggest that the ANC has been scrambling to catch up to the spontaneous, internally generated violence. According to government statistics, 170 guerrilla incidents occurred during 1986 (through 13 September), compared with 136 in 1985 and only 44 in 1984. The South African Institute of Strategic Studies also has noted a considerable increase in the use of AK-47 rifles over the past two years, as well as a rise in grenade attacks on police from seven during 1982-84 to 122 over the last two and a half years. In our judgment, many of these attacks have been the work of the ANC, but some were probably carried out by township militants with access to weapons but probably no ties to the ANC. [redacted]

The Government's Role in the Unrest

The government's reaction to the initial burst of black unrest in late 1984 clearly provoked, in our view, the quickening pace of black political activity. [redacted] and press reporting show that, in intensified efforts to suppress black political activity, the security forces have generated resentment by patrolling townships in armored vehicles, raiding homes, harassing citizens, and occupying schools. In October 1984, for example, 7,000 security personnel searched tens of thousands of houses in three townships south of Johannesburg. Security forces also have frequently overreacted to black protest activity. The police in

[redacted]

particular have fired on peaceful gatherings in numerous townships, including Winterveld, Mamelodi, Alexandra, and Soweto.

The government apparently is convinced that its security measures, including the imposition of a nationwide state of emergency on 12 June 1986 and near-total press blackout of reporting on black activity, have reduced the overall level of violence. Reliable independent statistics on incidents of unrest are now impossible to obtain given the strict government controls on information, but we believe that violence has subsided since mid-1986, declining from its peak level of about six fatalities per day to fewer than two per day by early 1987. By its own admission, however, the government has failed to eliminate attacks on collaborators and violence between black political groups. Moreover, opportunities for confrontations between blacks and security forces have grown with the increased presence of police and troops in the townships.

Trends in Black Politics

Despite the government's recent success in muting antigovernment violence and protests, black political activity has changed fundamentally during the current unrest. South African blacks are dramatically more politicized, increasingly organized, and tactically more sophisticated. In our judgment, these still evolving trends in black politics are now a permanent part of the South African scene, rendering as unlikely black acceptance of the government's limited reform plans and laying the groundwork for new and more destructive outbreaks of violence.

Politicization

Although black concern about basic socioeconomic needs has long been evident, numerous research groups have identified a growing political dimension to black frustration and resentment, one that increasingly ascribes the source of black problems to the political suppression of blacks by the white minority government. For millions of blacks, the resentment and frustration growing out of security force excesses, detentions of their children, and even restrictions on burying their dead have nurtured an ideology that is often vague and ill defined, but is, nonetheless, distinctly antigovernment and potentially antiwhite. Reporting from virtually all sources indicates that, for these politicized blacks, only the demise of white minority rule can end social and economic discrimination against blacks.

Black protest activity during the current unrest, in our judgment, has often deliberately sought to fuel the politicization of the black populations. Politically apathetic blacks have been forced to take sides when community groups organized rent, school, bus, and consumer boycotts. Although there are still many "fence sitters," community leaders often go from house to house seeking support, and militant youth frequently intimidate residents, forcing compliance with the boycotts.

Even some business and homeland leaders, who in the past had been considered moderates primarily concerned with social and economic issues, are now advancing strong political demands. For example, individuals such as Sam Motsuenyane, president of a major black business group, and Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, leader of the Zulus, have in the past year declared that they will not participate in Pretoria's power-sharing schemes unless Pretoria meets fundamental demands, such as releasing imprisoned ANC leader Nelson Mandela. The tendency for most black leaders to become more politicized—as well as more radical in their demands—stems in part from a desire to retain credibility in the face of pressure from township militants who reject reforms or negotiations on Pretoria's terms. In our judgment, however, Pretoria's own actions—specifically its reliance on repressive security tactics and the refusal to accelerate the government's reform agenda—probably have provided an even greater impetus.

Increasing awareness by blacks of the political dimensions of their plight has coincided with the government's imposition of measured reforms, but we believe most blacks consider government moves to be too little and too late.

Using the Education Issue

Black South Africans place a high value on education, and there is broad agreement among blacks that their education system is fundamentally flawed, according to various polls [redacted] *When, for example, an academic survey team asked 2,300 blacks what the government should do to improve their lives, the most popular response was "equal education," surpassing even "higher wages." Blacks generally believe, moreover, that education is the most important determinant of status and opportunity, according to an academic study, and most parents want a university education for their children* [redacted]

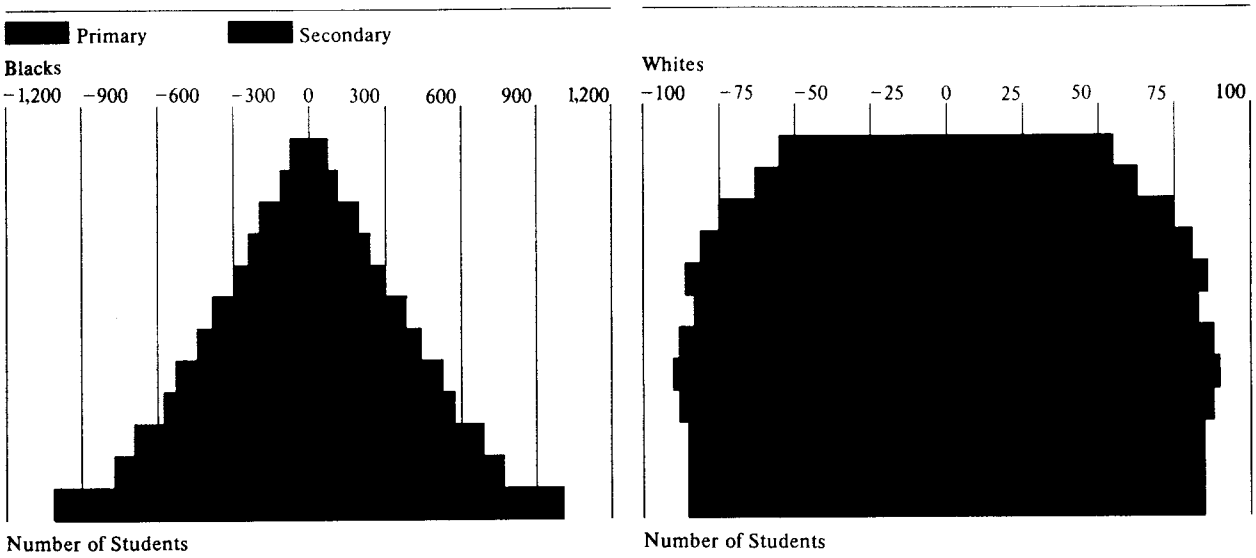
The reality, however, is that black children tend to drop out of school at a rapid rate—many after the first year. An academic study concluded that for every 100 black students who began school in 1973, only 10 survived to finish secondary school in 1984 and five of those failed their final exams. By contrast, 63 percent of whites finished secondary school for those same years. The current racial gap in educational expenditure is very wide and is attributable partly to the preponderance of "lowly qualified"—and poorly paid—black teachers; only 2.5 percent have university degrees and about 50 percent have the equivalent of tenth-grade educations or lower. Black schools also are understaffed; there were 43 black students per teacher in comparison with 18 for whites in 1985, according to government statistics. The government's promise of parity with white education by 1996 appears extremely unlikely, in our view, based on the need to more than double the number of teachers and multiply the number who are university graduates by 15. [redacted]

Schools became a major focal point for antiapartheid activity during the 1976-77 Soweto riots, which began as a protest against government education policy for blacks. Sporadic school boycotts that began in 1980 multiplied after 1984 as students protested the presence of the military in the townships, detentions of students and teachers, banning of student organizations, and, more generally, the grossly inferior system of black education itself. As the boycotts dragged into their third year in some townships—and the government closed some schools—parents became increasingly concerned about a generation of students with already dim employment prospects. [redacted]

Following the lead of a Soweto parents' group in October 1985, a National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) was formed in March 1985 to try to end the boycotts by negotiating improvements with the government. Pretoria's determination to remove political activity from the schools and to thwart the development of national antigovernment organization, however, led it in 1986 to impose new security regulations for schools and tighten restrictions on NECC activity. By the end of 1986 the government had detained most NECC leaders. According to press reports, more than 80,000 students were participating in boycotts in Transvaal and eastern Cape Provinces. [redacted] *most students above the fourth grade in eastern Cape Province were not in school. The government closed over 70 mostly secondary schools in Soweto and eastern Cape Province in October for the remainder of 1986 because of poor attendance.* [redacted]

Parent groups, the UDF, and even the ANC, have called for students to return to school in 1987 despite the continued presence of security forces and other objectionable conditions. Black leaders have publicly voiced fears about the long-term consequences of the boycotts; many students have already lost two or more years of schooling. Although most students appear to have returned to school in early 1987, we believe that boycotts will continue to break out given the growing militancy of youth and the continuing inadequacy of the education system. [redacted]

Figure 2
Distribution of Students by Grade Level



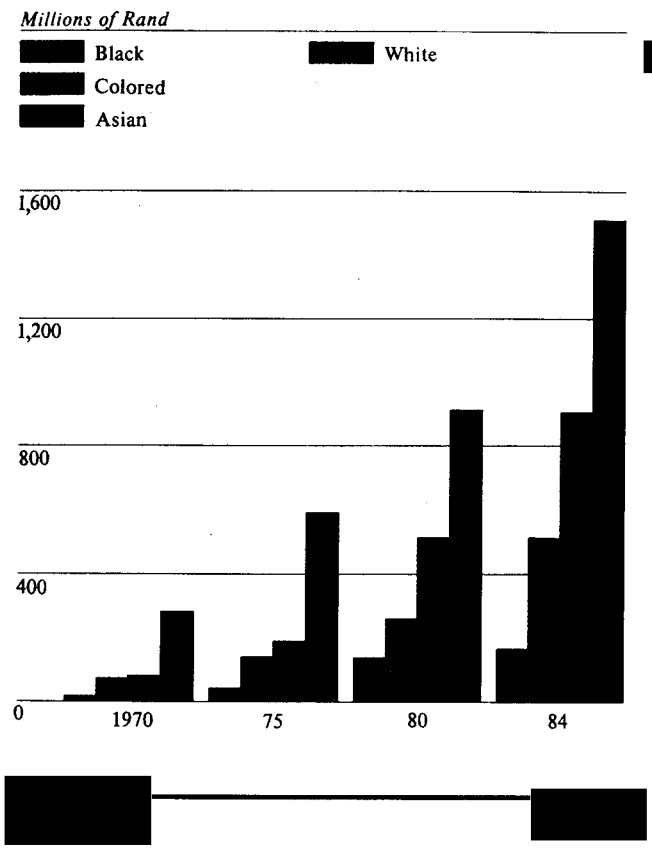
most blacks reject Pretoria's continued effort to dictate the terms of their political participation. Blacks ranging from Buthelezi to leaders of the United Democratic Front (UDF) insist publicly and in conversations with US diplomats that they will not enter into negotiations with Pretoria unless it is willing to change the fundamental structure of apartheid. We concur with a recent report on black politics by the prestigious South African Institute of Race Relations, which concluded that, unlike previous periods of unrest, black political demands now are centered on overturning—rather than restructuring—apartheid.

Blacks are skeptical of Pretoria's intentions and believe that the government is trying to trick blacks into accepting reforms that will further entrench apartheid. These beliefs have been fueled by rising expectations of rapid and genuine political change. In a 1986 survey of black opinion, 41 percent believed that blacks would win "a significant political voice" within at least 10 years.

Attitude Toward Capitalism. Some press reports and academic studies of emerging black political attitudes have noted that a growing anticapitalist sentiment is also part of the black politicization process. Data from several public opinion surveys indicate that black workers are generally antagonistic toward free enterprise, that most urban blacks are deeply prejudiced against capitalism, and that blacks generally identify capitalism with apartheid. This sentiment is borne out in the patterns of violence in black townships. Radicals usually target businesses in their attacks, as well as the despised black town councilors who are often closely linked to township business interests.

We believe, however, that these survey data do not necessarily reflect a permanent shift in black attitudes. Many black leaders argue that radical causes

Figure 3
Education, per Capita Expenditure by Race, 1970-84



have attracted blacks—particularly the young—only because most are shut out of the free enterprise system. Because of the importance blacks attach to education as a means of improving their economic prospects, we believe that many, if not most, blacks probably would support free enterprise concepts if jobs or opportunities were available to them. Many black activists, in fact, work in formal and informal private enterprises such as small shops or in unlicensed trade.

Organization

The politicization of South African blacks has been accompanied by a second trend in the black political dynamic—a growth in organizational activity. Because much of this activity is relatively new, small in scale, and often uncoordinated, it has remained vulnerable to government countermeasures, particularly those instituted during the current nationwide state of emergency. Despite government efforts to crush black organizations, [redacted] indicates that black antiapartheid groups survive in many, if not most, communities and are able to convey their political messages to blacks and spearhead black protests.

The black organizational chart is not clear-cut. The United Democratic Front is at the forefront of black organizations, but, [redacted] its importance and effectiveness rests less with its national structure than with its over 700 local affiliates. In our judgment, it is the hundreds of community groups—many of which are affiliated with the UDF—that form the backbone of black organization. Further complicating the black organizational chart is the role that youth play. Although many young South African black militants are—as often portrayed by the media—anarchic and without organization, black youth also lead and provide much of the membership of many mainstream community groups. Black labor unions are also an important contributor to black organizational activity. Finally, the African National Congress is attempting to define a role for itself with internal black groups, but we believe the ANC has only limited direct influence over the activities of the black opposition.

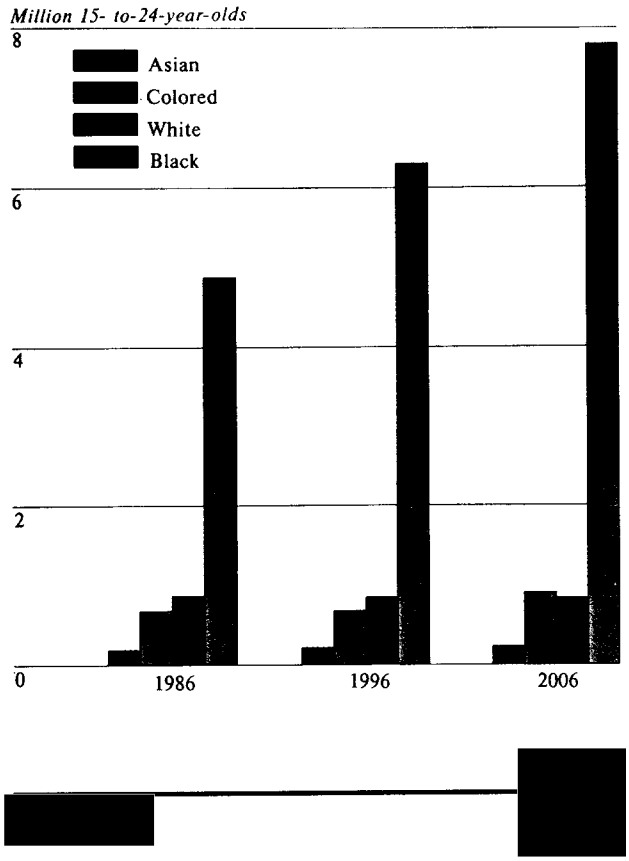
Community Organizations. The mushrooming of antigovernment groups in townships of all sizes probably is the clearest evidence that blacks have become not only politicized but also more organized. A myriad of youth, civic, church, and special action groups have sprung up, most of which are small and have limited capabilities because they operate almost exclusively in their own communities. Nevertheless, reports by [redacted] the press, and research groups indicate that many of these community associations have considerable local support and organizational strengths that allow them to carry out successful, if localized, protest campaigns.

In the more politicized townships, these groups are often able to organize protest action quickly, even under the strict regulations imposed by the state of emergency. Over 70 percent of Soweto's workers observed a work boycott in August 1986 that was staged to protest the police killing of 24 residents and was the most successful protest by that community since 1976, according to an academic monitoring group. Similarly, activists in Mamelodi township near Pretoria were able to convince 80 percent of its residents to observe a work boycott in November to commemorate the anniversary of the killing of 19 blacks by security forces. Even when the government intensified its crackdown in December 1986, community groups were able to organize relatively successful protest activities in Soweto [redacted]

A variety of reporting—although sketchy and incomplete—has described the organization of some black community groups into street and block committees that communicate and plan activities when larger meetings are banned and leaders are in hiding. Called the M-Plan, after Nelson Mandela who devised it in the 1950s, the system supposedly allows for organization during times of legal constraints. A recent academic study describes the organization of Lingehlihle, an eastern Cape Province township of 17,000, into seven zones, with 40 activists assigned to hold meetings in each zone. In another eastern Cape Province township, officials were elected to represent each street in the residents' association, according to press reports. Although the state of emergency restrictions almost certainly have hurt many of these local groups, we believe that this form of grassroots organizing continues. [redacted]

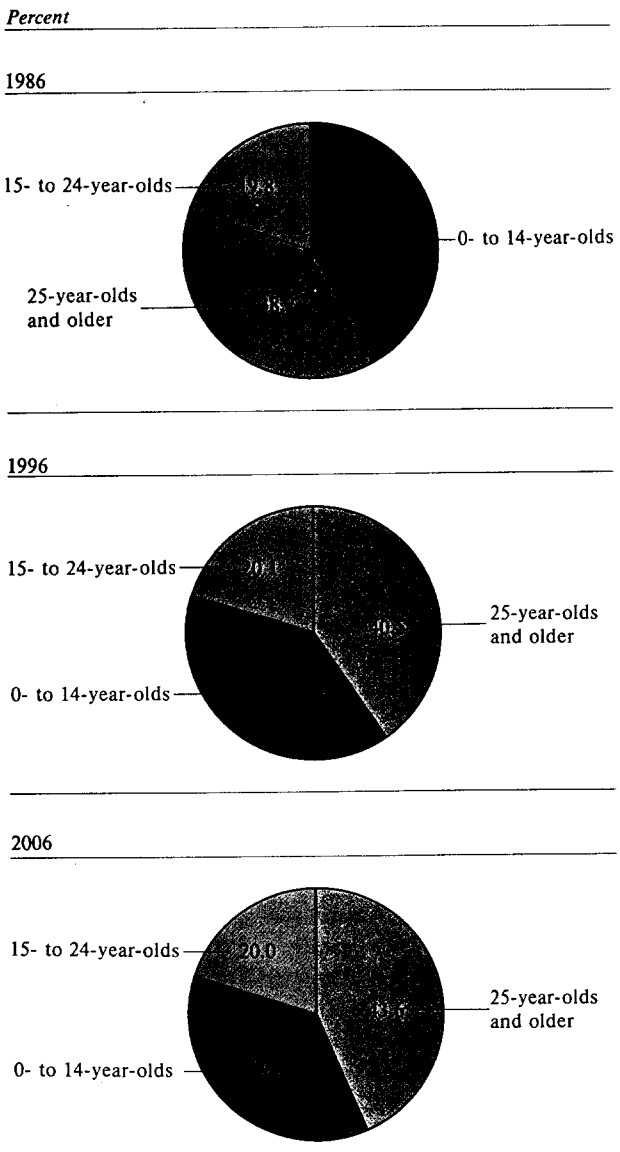
Youth Groups. In our judgment, the driving force behind the growing politicization of blacks has been the role of young blacks. [redacted] youth groups make up more than half of the over 700 UDF affiliates. Information on youth organizations is difficult to obtain because of their secrecy, and the existence of such groups often is not evident until they become involved in a publicized protest incident. During the 1986 rent boycott in Soweto, for example, [redacted] two large and specialized youth groups were active in the township: one composed of students and one of the working and unemployed [redacted]

Figure 4a
South Africa: Youth Population; 1986, 1996 and 2006



In addition to black youth who identify with the black political mainstream, the press [redacted] sources consistently report that militant youth or "comrades" frequently patrol the townships, enforcing boycotts, engaging in random violence, and forcing adults to participate in political activity. The influence of such militant youth appears to be growing. Press reports often describe these youth leaders as extremely radical and bordering on the anarchic, but our assessment of their activities suggests that at least some radical youth leaders have established disciplined organizations and have attempted to rein in their more reckless followers. [redacted]

Figure 4b
Composition of Black Population by Age[a]



[a] Estimated.
Source: US Bureau of the Census

A common characteristic of black youth, both those who work with the UDF and those who are more militant, is their impatience and desire for rapid change. Older black political activists consistently complain to US diplomats that the young are heedless of their advice and eager to push them aside. Black leaders worry that youth will become even more radical as long as Pretoria fails to address fundamental black demands [redacted]

Labor. Black labor unions, which gained in the 1970s the right to organize on workplace-related issues, have been able to operate more openly than many other antigovernment organizations despite their growing politicization. The formation late last year of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), a multiracial but predominantly black labor federation that draws together 33 unions claiming to represent over half the unionized work force, has produced an organization with a committed membership and hierarchical leadership recognized by both Pretoria and most black workers. From COSATU's inception, its leaders have indicated publicly and privately that they want to use the federation's potential power to achieve broader social and political gains for blacks. The group has taken an avowedly political stance on many issues, such as abolition of the Group Areas Act and educational reform, and has worked with the UDF in supporting consumer boycotts and one-day strikes. [redacted]

We believe, however, COSATU is still trying to determine its exact role in black politics, and its leaders apparently realize that a high political profile would bring government reprisals. South Africa's industrial relations were thrown into disarray during the first weeks of the state of emergency in June 1986, when union activities were sharply curtailed and top labor leaders detained. We believe that the experience brought home to COSATU leaders the cost of becoming too politically involved and has led them to concentrate for now on workplace-related activities. We expect, however, that COSATU and other unions will reengage on political issues when black protest activity swells again [redacted]

[redacted]

Violence as a Tactic

Advocating violence as a means of achieving political change is a serious offense under South African law, and therefore the outlawed ANC and the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) are the only black groups that endorse violence outright. We believe most of the intense township unrest has involved random—at times nihilistic—violence by youths without allegiance to any group. School boycotts and the high rate of unemployment, in our view, have produced thousands of idle and alienated youth who lash out at the system. Criminal gangs long active in most townships have undoubtedly been involved in many unrest incidents. Looting delivery trucks, commandeering cars, firebombing businesses, and attacking rivals and alleged collaborators are activities that often have straddled the line between political protest and wanton violence.

The increase in grenade attacks and armed assaults in the townships during the last two and a half years indicates that weapons are more readily available to blacks. We believe that many of these weapons came from ANC caches that have been distributed to township militants. The press reports, however, that blacks can sometimes purchase weapons on the illegal market. Pretoria itself has contributed to the proliferation of guns by arming many of its beleaguered town councilors.

Although most blacks personally oppose violence, a substantial proportion of the township population believes violence is, nevertheless, an accepted form of protest, according to a government-sponsored social research group. In a recent poll, moreover, almost one-fifth of the blacks surveyed thought killing black officials was "a good thing" and 60 percent of black respondents believed that, while they may not themselves support violence, most other blacks do. In another survey of black opinion, 42 percent thought South Africa's problems would not be solved peacefully.

Black attitudes toward killing whites are more difficult to gauge. Public opinion surveys and academic studies have not addressed the issue, and most blacks have not publicly advocated targeting whites. Although ANC announcements have warned of more white casualties from attacks on civilian targets in white urban areas, guerrilla spokesmen have not specifically advocated attacking whites. Fragmentary evidence from the press [redacted] with black activists point to growing antiwhite sentiment, but most black leaders probably still look to whites as potential allies against the government. Even so, government statistics do indicate a slow but perceptible increase in white casualties during the last two years and we expect this trend to continue. We believe, however, that a dramatic and bloody racial incident could suddenly break the apparent psychological barrier blocking black attacks on whites and the rate of white casualties could jump quickly.

Role of the ANC. The ANC has, [redacted] attempted to gain greater influence with internal black organizations, but we believe that Pretoria's charge that the ANC is directing and controlling black political activity—including the UDF—is overstated. Although the ANC has long attempted to build a political underground in South Africa, it apparently has had only limited success. [redacted] the press report that the township militants appear to lack serious affiliation with any broader group. Although there is considerable sympathy for ANC goals in such major antiapartheid organizations as the UDF and COSATU, and the ANC almost certainly has influence over some individual members of these groups, we do not believe the ANC controls these organizations. The UDF and COSATU, for example, have often disagreed with the ANC on issues such as school boycotts and negotiating with local authorities. Nevertheless, the ANC has capitalized on the internal unrest to enhance its

international position, to reinvigorate its image inside South Africa, and probably to recruit some new members from the townships

Despite its limited influence on black political activity, the ANC continues to be the most popular black political organization in South Africa, according to survey data. Black leaders across the political spectrum have called for the release of jailed ANC leader Nelson Mandela, and blacks have prominently displayed ANC banners at funerals and political rallies. We believe, however, that, although the widespread acclamation of Nelson Mandela—who has become a black national hero—is genuine, much of the support for the ANC itself derives largely from its symbolic importance as the oldest black nationalist movement. Public demonstrations of support also are acts of defiance against a government that not only has banned the organization and its symbols, but also consistently accuses the ANC of being a major threat to the stability of white rule.

Antigovernment Tactics

Increasingly politicized and organizationally more complex, South Africa's blacks are now employing more sophisticated tactics, principally the increased use of economic weapons and the effort by blacks to destroy and replace local government apartheid institutions. Pretoria's sweeping nationwide crackdown of June 1986 probably reflected its concerns mirrored in a joint report by the South African Institute of Race Relations and an urban research group, that, by late 1985, black groups employing these tactics were beginning to pose a greater long-term threat to exclusive white control than did random violence. We believe, moreover, that Pretoria still considers these tactics as ominous trends that must be halted.

Using Economic Leverage. Blacks during the past two and a half years have increasingly attempted to press for change by applying their economic power, whether it be in the form of politically motivated strikes, consumer boycotts, or rent boycotts. The South African economy is heavily dependent on blacks who constitute nearly 70 percent of the economically active labor force, and, according to government estimates, account for about 40 percent of consumer spending.

Black unions have been somewhat cautious about exercising this potential leverage, in part because leaders want to produce tangible, work-related economic gains to keep and attract members, and because Pretoria has responded to past political activism by cracking down hard and even banning major unions. Nevertheless, despite mounting unemployment, 1985 was the most strike-prone year in South African history and this trend continued into 1986, according to government statistics. The tendency to use work actions for political, as well as economic, goals also intensified during 1986 when COSATU and the UDF joined forces to organize two nationwide work boycotts. Following the imposition of the state of emergency, more militant unions staged numerous sit-down strikes to protest detentions of their leaders. Local one-day general strikes also were staged during the year to protest detentions of community leaders in eastern Cape Province and to mark the deaths of Soweto residents in a clash with police.

Utilizing black buying power as leverage by boycotting white-owned businesses became a popular local tactic during 1985-86. Blacks account for as much as half the consumer spending in some urban areas, according to a business research group, and press reports indicate that the boycotts have hurt white business in several cases. Other boycotts, however, lost popular support and eventually collapsed when organizers proved unable to control militant youth, who "enforced" the boycotts by physically attacking violators. Even the most successful consumer boycotts have failed to achieve their goals because local white businesses and governments cannot deliver on demands such as ending the state of emergency, removing troops from the townships, and freeing Nelson Mandela. Nevertheless, the boycotts have forced local white groups to recognize the legitimacy of black grievances. In Port Elizabeth, for example, one of the longest and most effective boycotts was suspended last year after the white chamber of commerce lobbied the government for the release of 19 detained black leaders.

A third form of economic leverage, rent boycotts, began in 1984 and have become more frequent since the state of emergency was declared in June 1986. By September 1986, rent boycotts had spread to some 54 townships, according to a community research group. Rents provide most of the revenue for the town councils, and a recent academic study concludes that rent boycotts have been responsible for the collapse of over 30 local government authorities. [redacted] nonpayment of rent and utilities is costing local authorities about $250 million per year as of October 1986. The success of the boycotts reflect in part a rejection of the government-imposed system, but, in organizing rent boycotts, activists have also found an issue that addresses the economic interests of township residents hit by rising unemployment and inflation. [redacted]

Challenging Apartheid Institutions. While rent boycotts have tried to undermine local apartheid structures by denying them operating funds, black activists have also sought to challenge the government politically in more direct ways—by attacking local government representatives and by creating their own quasi-governmental structures. The assault on the town council system has persisted despite the current security crackdown. Countrywide, 150 of 190 local black governments still exist on paper, according to government information, but many of these are literally under siege and cannot carry on daily business. A recent academic study of eastern Cape Province—where the battle against township government has been most intense—reveals that well over half of the 46 community councils have resigned and that there are vacancies in 60 percent of the 284 township wards. In Duncan Village, the entire council has been moved out of the township to a hotel in the nearby white city of East London, where they await government construction of a specially guarded compound. [redacted]

We believe the tactic that most concerned Pretoria and may have driven the massive security crackdown beginning in June 1986 was the effort by black groups to replace township governments with "alternative structures." [redacted] many civic associations had succeeded in taking over some services that were previously the responsibility of government entities. Community groups in some townships enhanced their support by delivering tangible benefits such as better refuse collection or school repairs. [redacted] UDF affiliates in eastern Cape Province have established community schools in church halls. In some cases, these civic groups even have negotiated for services with local white authorities. [redacted]

[redacted] by June 1986 as many as half of all urban blacks were living in communities where these "alternative structures" exercised some influence. For example:

- The white Oudtshoorn city council has administered a nearby black township since November 1985, bypassing the black town council and consulting directly with township community leaders on spending and other issues, according to press reports.

- In Port Alfred, community groups have collected "taxes" from residents and established day-care centers, parks, and other services, [redacted].

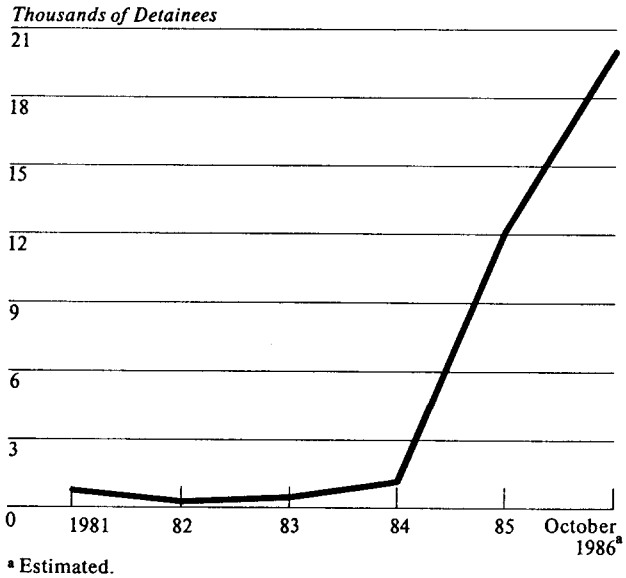
- Parts of the Crossroads squatter area near Cape Town were completely under the control of militant community organizations earlier this year. Police would enter the settlements only in large numbers, [redacted] We believe that the control by militants was a major reason why the government actively helped rightwing vigilantes to raze the area. [redacted]

Then Law and Order Minister Le Grange admitted to a business group in April 1986 that Pretoria had lost several areas to UDF-affiliated civic associations, but that the government would ensure that the UDF would not rule any part of South Africa. The state of emergency was designed in part to neutralize the civic associations, and we believe that security forces have seriously weakened the "alternative structures" in many areas. On the basis of press [redacted] reporting, however, we believe that civic and youth groups, despite the detention of thousands of activists, still challenge government authorities for control of some townships. [redacted]

Impediments to Organized Antigovernment Activity

Despite increasing politicization among blacks, their growing organizational capabilities, and their more sophisticated tactics, black resistance currently has clear limits. We believe that, while blacks have established the capacity to stymie Pretoria's plans for their political future, such as the township governments and a proposed National Statutory Council that would allow blacks to consult with Pretoria on powersharing, they have not yet been able to translate their protests into positive gains that move them closer to sharing political power with whites at the national level. Pretoria's determination to limit black protest has prevented the emergence of effective national black leaders. Sharp, enduring intrablack divisions have presented formidable obstacles to sustained, cohesive, and effective campaigns by antigovernment organizations. These factors, moreover, have largely shaped the dimensions, intensity, nature, timing, and circumstances of black protest politics. [redacted]

Figure 5
Detentions: 1981-October 1986



[a] Estimated.

Government Countermeasures

The government has at its disposal substantial physical and legal resources to suppress unrest and limit antigovernment activity. Since the security crackdown began in June 1986, the government has detained thousands of activists, banned the meetings and publications of dozens of antigovernment groups, stationed security forces in schools to prohibit political activity, cut off the flow of foreign funds to the UDF, and placed severe restrictions on unrest-related information. [redacted]

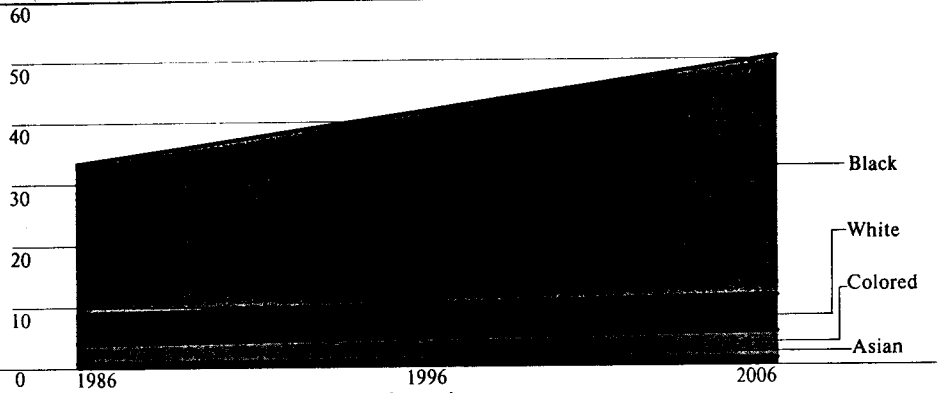
Government repressive actions have been particularly effective in preventing the emergence of effective national black leaders. By detaining, arresting, and limiting the public exposure of antigovernment leaders, Pretoria has prevented most of them from building more than local bases of support. During the 1985-86 partial state of emergency, for example, the government detained 12 of the 16 members of the UDF national executive and 50 of its 80 regional executives. Some 70 percent of the more than 20,000 detainees during the current state of emergency have been UDF leaders and activists—mostly community leaders—according to UDF Copresident Archie Gumede, while many in the top leadership have gone into hiding. [redacted]

The government's success is reflected by results of numerous surveys of black opinion. While 40 to 50 percent of blacks surveyed consistently list Nelson Mandela as the most important black leader, the rest of the responses are spread among five or six others, usually including Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Zulu Chief Buthelezi, but with none normally receiving over 15 percent of the vote. Other leaders with a supposed national base, such as the UDF copresidents, the colored leader Allan Boesak, or the black consciousness Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO) president, are rarely mentioned in such surveys. [redacted]

Figure 6
South Africa's Population, 1986 to 2006

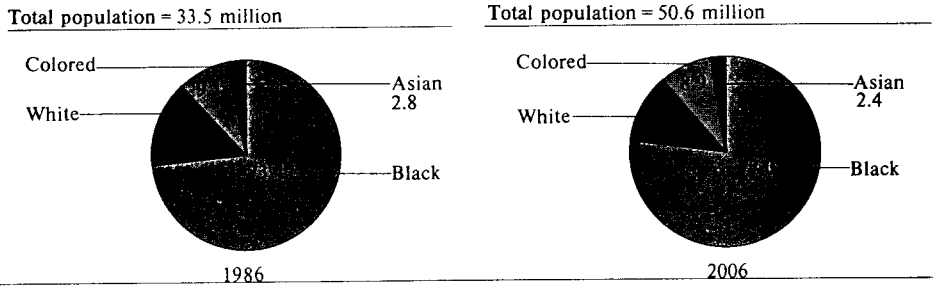
The estimated total population growth for the next two decades . . .

Million



shows the black proportion increasing while the proportions of other groups are decreasing . . .

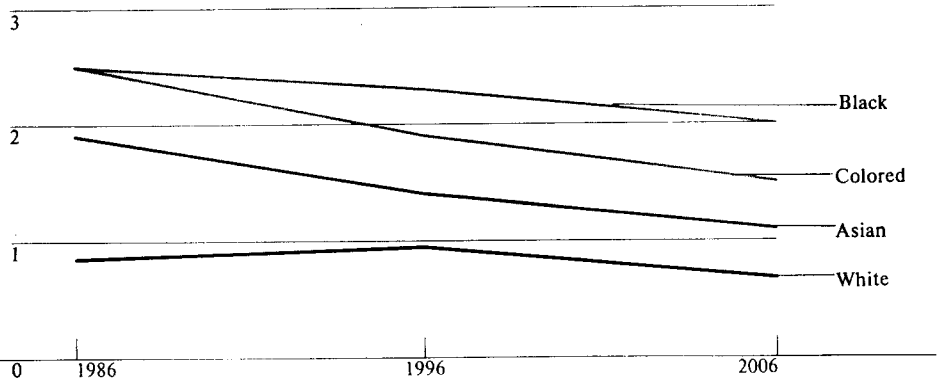
Percent



as a result of differential population growth rates.

Percent

Total Population Growth Rate	
1986	2.3%
1996	2.1%
2006	1.8%



Source: US Bureau of the Census

Pretoria has developed a massive security apparatus geared at least as much to internal threats as to external ones. We estimate that over 600,000 men and women participate at least part-time in some aspect of South African internal security or defense. However, the government believes that its 48,000-man police force is grossly inadequate to contain unrest and reduce crime in urban areas and plans to increase the force to 96,000 within 10 years. Meanwhile, Pretoria is relying on the South African military, which has played a key role in the present security crackdown. During 1985, over 35,000 troops were deployed in a total of 96 townships, according to the South African Minister of Defense, and we believe that troop presence in the townships during the state of emergency has probably exceeded that number. In a worst case situation, Pretoria would have at its disposal as many as 500,000 troops if all reservists were mobilized. However, we believe removing that many whites from the active labor force would have devastating effects on the economy.

Pretoria designed and located black townships to facilitate control. Townships and white areas are separated to prevent unrest from spilling over and threatening whites. By using roadblocks, security forces can quickly seal off a township during periods of unrest. The pattern of roads and houses inside townships also was designed to meet security specifications. One academic researcher reports that architectural plans for black townships near Durban in the late 1950s specified that roads be wide enough for a South African armored personnel carrier to make a U-turn, and prescribed a specific distance between houses to avoid impeding police weapons fire and to make it more difficult for fugitives to evade authorities

There are, however, potential limits on the capacity of security forces to control townships from the inside, in our view. The increase in the urban black population—forecast to grow by over 20 percent in the next 10 years, according to a government-funded research organization—is creating overcrowded township conditions that are wreaking havoc with security designs. The shortage of black housing is forcing blacks to build squatter shacks in yards of township houses and

Tribal Dynamics Under Apartheid

Pretoria has designated 13 percent of South African territory for 10 linguistically based black homelands where a total of about 12 million blacks reside. The homelands are widely scattered throughout South Africa (see the map), which helps reinforce the cultural and linguistic differences among tribal groups.

Some tribal groups long have been hostile toward each other. For example, the Zulu and the Xhosa have been at odds since the 1800s, when some Xhosa warriors aided the British in battles against the Zulu, and the aggressive expansion of the Zulu empire forced the Xhosa to flee from their traditional area. The historical rivalry increases the volatility of black townships that have large Xhosa and Zulu populations. Subtribal disputes also are common in some areas. The most serious involve Zulu clans that have feuded for over a century. Although Inkatha leader Gatsha Buthelezi repeatedly has deplored the killings, even clans headed by Inkatha members have been known to battle each other, according to the US Embassy.

As part of antiapartheid black politics, many blacks are beginning to reject the concept of "ethnicity," which they see as part of Pretoria's strategy to keep blacks weak and divided. Survey data from March 1986, for example, indicate that educated urban blacks tend to identify themselves as South African rather than as members of a distinct tribal group. Although a study of educated, high-income blacks in the northern Sotho homeland of Lebowa showed a similar pattern, followup questions revealed deep-seated fears concerning the possibility of a black government dominated by the more numerous Zulu or Xhosa

on vacant land, creating a denser settlement pattern. More than 1.5 million people—or about 40 percent of the black population—in the Durban area live in squatter shacks, according to a respected urban research organization. The continuing urbanization process suggests that, over the long term, the security forces will find it more difficult to operate in some townships.

Black Factionalism

Divisions among blacks along ideological, ethnic, and generational lines not only have complicated efforts at political organization but also frequently have caused violent confrontations. Government statistics indicate that by early 1986 intrablack conflict had surpassed security force action as the cause of most unrest-related deaths among blacks.

Some of the bloodiest intrablack clashes have occurred between ethnic groups with longstanding mutual grievances. Although such clashes generally are unrelated to antigovernment activity, blacks claim that apartheid aggravates tribal tensions that have contributed to the fighting. For example, outbreak of fighting between the Zulus and the Pondos in December 1985, which claimed over 50 lives, began as a dispute over Pondo settlement rights in a squatter area reserved by the government for Zulus. Disputes commonly occur between township residents and migrants of differing tribes living under apartheid strictures in single-sex hostels. In our judgment, however, while some tribally based conflicts can be traced to the unique conditions apartheid creates, many of these disputes, particularly in the rural areas, are much like the tribally inspired conflicts in black-ruled countries of Sub-Saharan Africa.

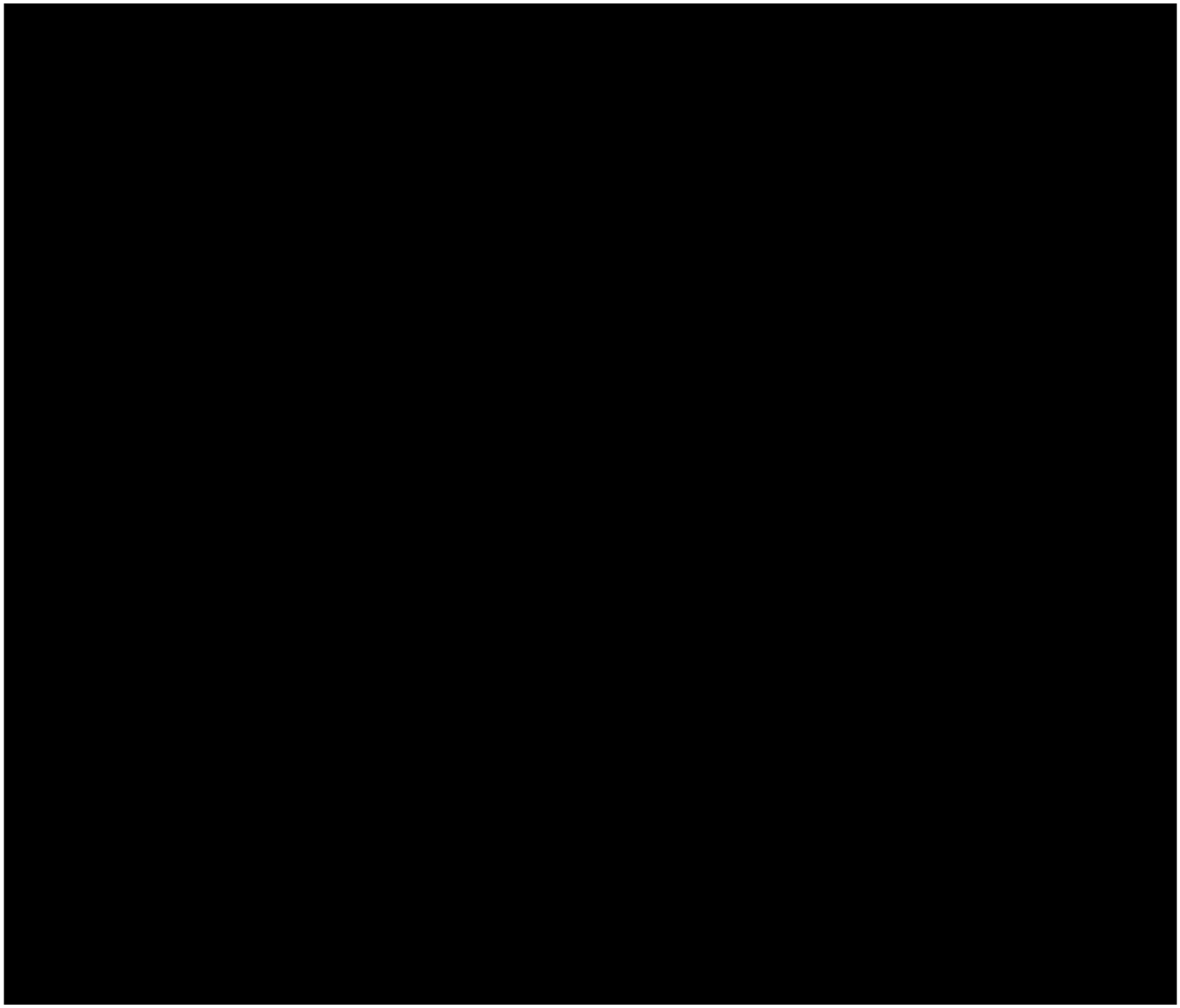
Intergenerational conflict, on the other hand, has been more directly associated with antigovernment activity. Tensions often surface within black communities as militant youths accuse their elders of passively accepting apartheid, or force adult compliance with political actions such as boycotts. Adult resentment of youths making decisions for the community sometimes has led to open fighting.

Violence also has flared with increased frequency between antiapartheid political groups during 1985-86. These clashes have occurred most frequently between supporters of Inkatha, the Zulu political and cultural group, on one side, and supporters of the UDF and Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO) in the Transvaal and eastern Cape Provinces, on the other the violence seldom involves fine points of ideology but often are battles over turf and members. A black clergyman, who has negotiated several UDF-AZAPO truces in Soweto, believes that most attacks have been motivated by personal vendettas.

Pretoria long has used divide-and-rule tactics against its black majority and undoubtedly believes that limited intrablack violence works to its advantage. The government thus has done little to stop such factional fighting, in our judgment. Some township residents charge that police rarely seek out killers of apartheid opponents and that Pretoria has even hired gangsters to attack black activists.

Resistance From Blacks in Power. Militant attacks on blacks working within the system—such as government officials and suspected informers—have over the past two years forced many such persons to flee their townships, but beginning in the second half of 1985 black government officials began to fight back. They have organized vigilante groups to stage counterattacks on the militants and to neutralize antigovernment community organizations. Vigilante leaders have exploited intergenerational tensions and relied heavily on the use of outsiders—hostel dwellers and illegal migrants.

Although there is evidence of government encouragement or support for some of the vigilante groups, we believe that many of these squads were formed in response to specific local conditions, with each group having its own peculiar history and characteristics. Nevertheless, the vigilantes, in our view, have in many cases been more successful than the security forces in subduing popular groups. We believe the vigilantes have enjoyed this success because they have specific targets, know the community better than the police, and can operate with fewer constraints



Prospects

The Near Term

During the next year the momentum of black political organizations will almost certainly continue to be checked by Pretoria's willingness to flex its security muscles to suppress protest. Government countermeasures that prohibit gatherings, detain thousands of black leaders, and divert the energy of most others by forcing them to concentrate on avoiding police actions, are likely to result in less visible turmoil than was evident during the 20 months preceding the national state of emergency.

Nevertheless, violence will persist, as it has since the imposition of the state of emergency in June 1986. Militants will continue to attack blacks deemed to be

collaborators. School boycotts probably will continue in many areas as students protest the presence of security forces in the schools, the detention of student leaders, and the general conditions and content of black education. Those taking part in boycotts and the unemployed township youth are likely to continue to engage in random violence.

We believe the South African Government recognizes that, in addition to curtailing violence, it must also attempt to reverse unfavorable trends in the black community. The state of emergency, in our judgment, has only created a facade of calm behind which black grievances continue to fester and grow. Nevertheless, the government probably still calculates that moderate blacks will step forward and support recent reforms if the security forces promote stability by breaking the militant stranglehold in the townships. To this end, we expect Pretoria covertly to create, support, and fund various cooperative, "moderate" black organizations. At the same time, the government will try to prevent the legitimization of popularly based groups by discouraging local white government and business leaders from dealing with them.

Although most blacks probably favor greater order in the townships and are fearful about the uncertainties and ultimate consequences of violent black protest, they will not, in our judgment, move in great numbers to accept the government's reform proposals or support "moderate" black organizations. Regardless of the doubts that they may entertain about their ability to force change in the near term, most blacks, in our view, harbor no illusions concerning the limited aims of Pretoria's reform strategy. We believe this distrust of government intentions will persist, and probably intensify, as the politicization of the black community continues.

Many community organizations will be wounded—some severely—by the sustained security crackdown, but many black activists will continue to operate and organize antiapartheid forces in the townships. Black community leaders have told the US Embassy that individuals usually emerge quickly to take the place of murdered or detained activists.

moreover, that many adult leaders who have not been detained are lying low, in the process leaving the field to less cautious, more militant youth.

Antigovernment tactics will focus on issues of immediate and material concern to blacks: living costs and education. Rent boycotts probably will be a particularly successful device for stimulating political participation because they combine the economic interests of township residents with antigovernment activism. These efforts will be largely under the direction of local organizations. At some point we expect Pretoria to attempt to break selected boycotts by evicting perhaps thousands from housing for which there are long waiting lists. Violence is almost certain to accompany such efforts.

Longer Term Outlook

In our view, South Africa faces a state of endemic violence over the next several years that will be fueled by urbanization, a black labor force far outpacing the job-creation potential of a slow-growth economy, white intransigence and partiality for brute force, and black anger and frustration. Although the intensity of this violence will fluctuate, and the pattern will alternate between intrablack political fighting, mass security force actions in the townships, and occasional black attacks against whites, we believe blacks and whites both will be increasingly affected. Ominous demographic trends indicate that the young black population will continue to grow faster than employment opportunities, and thus be supportive of radical political causes. Many will join armed township militants—some associated with the ANC—which are likely to increase attacks on civilian targets, resulting in more white casualties.

Pretoria will react to black unrest—and particularly to attacks on whites—by employing its security apparatus to whatever extent necessary to contain the violence. Although we believe that the government is willing to use extreme measures, such as massive detention camps or widespread use of lethal force, Pretoria probably will not resort to such means unless violence—and specifically white casualties—increases

How Blacks View Political Negotiations

Pretoria has tried to devise various structures for black-white negotiations. As a result of the government's efforts to prevent the emergence of cohesive black political organizations and a national black leadership, however, there is no single black leader—with the probable exception of jailed ANC leader Nelson Mandela—with enough stature and credibility to obtain a mandate to negotiate for blacks. Even Chief Buthelezi has been reluctant to agree to formal talks with Pretoria lest he be seen as too close to the white regime and, therefore, irrelevant to black politics.

Most antiapartheid groups believe that blacks eventually will attain political rights through negotiations because blacks appear unable to displace whites by force. Almost all black groups, however, have stipulated conditions that Pretoria must meet before negotiations can occur. During 1985, the release of Nelson Mandela became a common precondition for groups across the political spectrum. In addition, the UDF and the ANC at times have specified that Pretoria must agree beforehand that negotiations take place for "the transfer of power"—language that means "unconditional surrender" to whites. At other times, however, the ANC has affirmed its willingness to discuss merely "an extension of democracy" with Pretoria.

We believe the ANC and the UDF probably would be willing to negotiate with the government if they were convinced that Pretoria really intended to relinquish substantial power. In our judgment, however, no credible black organization would agree to such discussions while recognized leaders are in jail and the ANC is barred from participating. We believe that the minimum black preconditions, therefore, are the unbanning of the ANC and the release of political prisoners.

Meanwhile, however, considerable negotiating goes on between blacks and the government at the local level. Community organizations—many of which are UDF affiliates—have discussed improvement in services and relayed the desires of township residents to local white officials, and have frequently reached compromises with police on such issues as funeral restrictions, The most significant local negotiations have occurred in Natal Province, where blacks and whites met during 1986 to devise a formula for joint governance of the province. However, Pretoria is almost certain to veto such proposals.

at substantial rates, a development that we believe is possible but not probable during the next three to four years. Once the government decides that such steps are necessary, however, we doubt that international or domestic pressure from black and white moderates will have any impact on its decision.

We believe that black antigovernment attitudes will harden and the moderate base will shrink further as a result of the protracted—and probably permanent—security crackdown. The growing politicization of blacks, therefore, is almost certainly irreversible, in our view. More blacks will enter the fray in reaction to their living conditions, apartheid strictures, and pressure from township militants.

Without a major reversal in the thinking of either black or white leaders, therefore, negotiations will become less likely. Although it is possible that Pretoria's denial of a forum for black political activities will force black activists to work within the government's designs, we believe that such moderation is becoming increasingly unlikely. Judging from past patterns, Pretoria's actions thus far—either its repressive tactics or its attempts to sell reforms—have only tended to widen the gulf between the government and the increasing numbers of angry and frustrated blacks demanding political rights.

Implications for the United States

As the violent stalemate between blacks and whites keeps apartheid in the forefront of international issues, and because of Moscow's limited influence on internal developments, South African blacks will continue to seek Western assistance and look especially to the United States, in our judgment. Although a review of the black South African press reveals growing anti-American sentiment, [redacted] many black leaders still believe that the United States is capable both of helping blacks and of coercing the white regime to share power. Blacks increasingly will petition the United States to fund social welfare and human rights programs, particularly in education and legal assistance. Moderate blacks also frequently have pointed to the poorly developed black private sector as an area of opportunity for US assistance. Even under the best of circumstances, however, the United States probably can expect to be rebuffed by antiapartheid forces that have an unrealistic assessment of the West's ability to influence Pretoria and are impressed by the tangible Soviet support to the ANC. [redacted]

The South African Government almost certainly will not be of any help in US efforts to establish good relations with the black community. We do not expect Pretoria to become any more receptive to Western persuasions any time soon, nor do we anticipate any dramatic acceleration of its reform program. The government is more likely to thwart US attempts to help blacks by, for example, restricting black groups from receiving foreign funds or denying visas to US officials involved in aid programs. [redacted]

Growing racial turmoil in South Africa will continue to offer the Soviet Union opportunities to discredit the West, both with South African blacks and international audiences. Moscow, in our view, expects a lengthy process of change. The Soviets probably calculate that the ANC will be the principal vehicle for change in South Africa and view the banned South African Communist Party as an important means of influence within the ANC, along with ANC dependence on the Soviet Union for military support. Moscow has treated the ANC as its "natural ally" in the region deserving of financial, political, and military support. In the long term, the Soviets clearly favor the rise to power of a pro-Soviet black government, but for the present appear primarily concerned with exploiting politically, especially with Third World countries, the dilemma that the South African problems pose for the West. [redacted]